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ARTICLES:

(1) Nago mayor accept new proposal on Futenma relocation, agrees to build two runways in V-shape

SANKEI (Top Play) (Excerpt)
April 8, 2006

Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Fukushima Nukaga and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro met in the JDA building yesterday and agreed to build two runways in a V-shape to prevent US military aircraft from flying over residential areas. The deal has ended a

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bitter battle over the relocation of the heliport functions of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, one of the major obstacles facing the Japanese and US government in finalizing the US military realignment in Japan.

(2) Gov't, Nago agree on V-shaped runways

ASAHI (Top play) (Abridged)
April 8, 2006

The Defense Agency and the city of Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, basically agreed yesterday to build two runways in a V-shape at the site of a new airfield to be built in the city as an alternative for the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan. The Japanese and US governments had agreed in October last year to relocate the heliport functions of Futenma airfield to an area across the cape of Henoko in the northern coastal city, a major issue pending in their ongoing talks over the realignment of US forces in Japan. The Japanese government will incorporate this plan in a final report to be shortly released with the US government on their realignment talks. Japan and the United States agreed in 1996 on the return of Futenma airfield. About 10 years later, however, the airfield has yet to be returned to Japan. The two governments will now likely move ahead for the return of Futenma airfield.

Defense Agency Director General Nukaga and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro reached the agreement after meeting for about four hours at the Defense Agency.

"The city of Nago agreed (to the government's Futenma relocation plan), and it's a landmark," Nukaga told a joint press conference following the meeting. "I want to do my best to maintain our overall deterrence and alleviate the burden," the defense chief added. Shimabukuro also said, "I'm very glad that the city's standpoint has been accepted." The mayor added, "I will explain this (to the city's local population), and then I want to obtain consent."

The agreed plan is to build two runways in the shape of a V from the southwest to the northeast in the almost same area as planned to be reclaimed at both ends from the sea and to lay down the new

airfield across the cape of Henoko. Aircraft and choppers will come from the southwest in their landing approach but will use another clockwise runway in their takeoff. This will make it possible for US warplanes—at least under their visual flight rule (VFR)—to avoid flying over the city's residential areas as desired by the city's local communities concerned about safety.

"We presented this V-shaped-runway plan to our US counterparts," a government official said yesterday evening. "They consented to the plan, so we showed it to the city of Nago," the official added. Nukaga, however, suggested the need for the Japanese government to talk about details with the US government, although Tokyo has obtained Washington's basic understanding. Nukaga also said the government would set up a consultative body with Nago and other base-hosting municipalities to proceed with local coordination over the plan's feasibility and economic promotional packages.

However, Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine remains committed to opposing the Henoko coastal relocation plan. Inamine will visit Tokyo today to meet with Nukaga and oppose the plan.

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(3) Futenma relocation: Government, Nago agree on two-runway plan to remove residential areas from flight path

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
April 8, 2006

Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga held talks with Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro at the Defense Agency on April 7 to discuss a plan to relocate the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station from Ginowan to the coastline of Camp Schwab in Nago. As a result, the two reached an agreement on building two runways, one for takeoffs and the other for landings. Shimabukuro agreed to the government's revised plan presented by Nukaga designed to remove residential areas from the flight path. The government intends to produce a final US force realignment plan with Washington after conducting senior-working-level talks on April 13-14 and cabinet-level talks later this month.

The revised plan agreed on by the government and Nago is designed to build two runways in a V-shape. The main runway to be built by turning the direction of the government plan's runway slightly counterclockwise will be used for takeoffs and landings in good visibility and landings in poor visibility. The other runway to be built further offshore by slightly modifying the government's plan will be mainly used for takeoffs in bad weather.

Main points agreed upon on the Futenma relocation plan

1. The flight paths will avoid the skies over the Henoko, Toyohara, and Abu districts in Nago.

2. In determining the construction site based on the government's plan, consideration will be given to: (a) the safety of the residents near the new airfield; (b) natural conservation; and (c) the feasibility of the construction project.

3. Affected local governments, including the Okinawa prefectural and Nago municipal governments, will earnestly continue talks on the construction plan.

4. Prior to making a cabinet decision on a Japan-US agreement on the realignment of US forces in Japan, the government will hold talks with Okinawa, Nago, and other municipalities.

(4) Chronology of Futenma events

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)
April 8, 2006

September 1995: A local schoolgirl was raped by US servicemen.

April 1996: Prime Minister Hashimoto and US Ambassador to Japan

Mondale agreed on the return of Futenma airfield.

November 1997: The government presented Nago City, Okinawa, with a plan to build a sea-based heliport as an alternative to take over the heliport functions of Futenma airfield.

December 1997: Nago City polled its residents over whether to accept the government-proposed sea-based heliport construction plan. (In the plebiscite, anti- and conditionally anti-heliport votes accounted for 53%, with pro- and conditionally pro-heliport

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votes accounting for 45%.) Nago Mayor Tetsuya Higa accepted the sea-based heliport plan and resigned.

February 1998: Okinawa Gov. Masahide Ota rejected the sea-based heliport plan. Nago City's Deputy Mayor Tateo Kishimoto elected Nago mayor.

November 1998: Keiichi Inamine became Okinawa Prefecture's new governor with a campaign pledge to precondition his acceptance of Futenma relocation to a site in Okinawa Prefecture on building a dual-purpose airport for joint military and civilian use.

November 1999: Gov. Inamine designated an area off the coast of Henoko, Nago City, for Futenma relocation.

July 2002: An alternative facility conference (consisting of the Japanese government, Okinawa prefectural government, and local municipalities) adopted a basic plan to build a 2,500-meter facility at a reclamation site in waters off Henoko.

August 2004: A US military helicopter crashed onto the campus of Okinawa International University.

October 2005: Nago Mayor Kishimoto clarified that he would not run for a third term. The Japanese and US governments agreed to relocate Futenma airfield to a coastal area across the cape of Henoko in Nago.

January 2006: Yoshikazu Shimabukuro elected Nago mayor.

March 2006: Defense Agency Director General Nukaga and Nago city officials, including Mayor Shimabukuro, began consultations to retouch the Henoko coastal relocation plan.

April 2006: The Defense Agency and Nago City reached a basic agreement.

(5) Futenma relocation: Gov't, Okinawa to continue talks; Gov. Inamine rejects remodified plan

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Abridged)
April 9, 2006

Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga and Okinawa Prefecture's Governor Keiichi Inamine met yesterday. In the meeting, Inamine indicated that he could not accept the government's plan to relocate the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in the city of Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, while the government and the city's mayor have now agreed to remodify the plan. "Okinawa Prefecture will continue to uphold its stance," Inamine told Nukaga in the meeting. At the same time, however, Inamine also said he would respect the city's judgment. With this, the governor showed some understanding. He also implied that there was some room to give way to the government, saying, "We will continue talks with the government."

(6) Futenma relocation: US not opposed to remodified plan

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
Eve., April 8, 2006

Aya Igarashi, Washington

The Japanese government and the city of Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, have now concurred on a remodified plan to relocate the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station to the city. In response to the concurrence, US State Department Spokesman McCormack met the press on April 7 and revealed that the US Defense Department was now checking to see if there would be problems from the perspective of US military operations. "The Department of Defense is now studying the proposal from Japan," McCormack said.

The Pentagon will not oppose the remodified plan, taking the position that it would not substantially affect the Japanese and US governments' agreement of October last year and that the local agreement will improve the plan's feasibility.

(7) Commentary: Feasibility considered, challenges still in store

ASAHI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
April 8, 2006

The government sought feasibility, with the city of Nago insisting on the safety of its residents. Tokyo and Nago basically agreed yesterday on a plan to build two V-shaped runways as the kind of greatest common denominator between the two sides to take over the heliport functions of Futenma airfield.

The Defense Agency stuck to its land-based plan in order to heighten the feasibility of construction. The government had initially planned to build a sea-based facility off the coast of Henoko. However, this offshore installation plan suffered a setback in the face of local opposition. The government therefore did not want to be frustrated again. The sea-based heliport plan foundered on local protests out at sea.

Meanwhile, Nago strongly called for moving the planned facility to a site at sea. Eventually, however, the government gave up on an offshore installation. The agreed plan will avoid flying over residential areas. Yet, there are still questions, such as how to ensure that US warplanes fly along their flight paths. In addition, some government officials are also concerned about noise pollution. Laying down an additional runway will result in enlarging the acreage of land reclamation from the sea, which could also bring about environmental damage. For instance, dugongs will lose the underwater forest of seaweed they depend on.

"The government gave first consideration to the safety of local residents in their daily lives, and we didn't make light of the environment," Nukaga stressed. However, such an account is unconvincing. Furthermore, the cost of construction will also balloon.

In the meantime, Okinawa Prefecture's Governor Keiichi Inamine has called for the government to build a dual-use airfield for joint military-civilian use and set a 15-year time limit on the US military's use of the newly planned facility in order to prevent the new base from becoming permanent. The agreed plan, however, fails to guarantee these points. The governor is not expected to accept the remodified plan.

Gov. Inamine has authority for coastal reclamation off the cape of Henoko. This reclamation work is expected to start in several

years' time. However, the government, should it fail to obtain the Okinawa prefectural government's understanding, will likely move ahead for special legislation intended to transfer coastal reclamation authority from the governor to Tokyo. Such a move could likely cause Tokyo and Okinawa to square off again.

(8) On Futenma relocation, JDA chief, Nago mayor reach compromise agreement complying with calls for both coastal base and one that

avoids residential areas

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Excerpts)
April 8, 2006

The deal, reached between Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Fukushima Nukaga and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro in Tokyo yesterday, complies with both sides' positions by constructing two runways.

Nukaga's call was for constructing an alternative heliport on the coast line of Camp Schwab as agreed on between Japan and the US. Meanwhile, Shimabukuro's assertion was that a runway should be built on reclaimed land with the aim of avoiding noise pollution in nearby residential areas and also of producing economic benefits to the local economy. To comply with both sides' desires, the government came up with the new plan.

(9) Okinawa Gov. Inamine: Futenma agreement between central government, Nago City wholly unexpected

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 26) (Excerpts)
April 8, 2006

A plan to relocate the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, which is surrounded by residential areas, is now about to get underway. Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga and Nago Mayor Shimabukuro agreed on the night of April 7 to build two runways in a V-shape at the planned heliport on the coast of Camp Schwab. Shimabukuro said, "My city's opinion was accepted." Okinawa Gov. Kenichi Inamine, however, showed a firm expression, saying, "It was wholly unexpected." Okinawa Prefecture, which has suffered from US bases, is being shaken by the sudden agreement between the central government and the Nago City.

At a press conference held at the Defense Agency, Shimabukuro said, "I'm paying my respects to the defense chief," and the two shook hands. They believe that using separate takeoff and landing runways will be able to prevent US military aircraft from flying over residential areas.

Inamine told reporters, "I will maintain my previous stance." He expressed that there was no change in his position that unless the Futenma base is relocated to an offshore airfield to be built on a reclaimed land, the base should be moved from Okinawa.

Miyagi Minoru, 67, director of Nago City's Toyohara Ward, located under the flight rout, said, while watching the news on TV: "I was surprised at the idea of building two runways. I'm glad that the flight rout was changed in consideration of the safety of citizens." He then continued: "I don't think US military aircraft will take that rout. I would like specific explanations from the mayor when he returns home. I will then make a judgment."

(10) Okinawa governor takes Nago government's agreement as

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"unexpected"

SANKEI (Page 1) (Full)
April 8, 2006

Hearing the news of the Nago municipal government's agreement on a revised plan on the relocation of the Futenma Air Station, Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine stated last night: "I would like to respect the independent decision of Nago."

In a meeting with Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga in Tokyo today, though, Governor Inamine is determined to say that he will not accept any plan other than the initial offshore plan, as he remarked, "I will convey my determination to maintain the prefecture's stance." The governor said: "Of importance is that the cabinet decision on the initial offshore plan was made through a lot of effort." He then commented that Nago municipal government's agreement was "unexpected."

(11) Futenma relocation: Nukaga seeks Inamine's support for two-runway plan

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Abridged slightly)
Evening, April 8, 2006

Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga held talks with Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine at the agency around noon today. In the talks, the defense chief sought Inamine's understanding of a plan to build two runways in a V-shape, as was agreed upon with Nago. The new plan to build two runways requires land reclamation, for which the governor's approval is essential. Inamine is believed to have rejected the V-shaped runway plan.

In his talks with Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro yesterday, Nukaga presented a modified Camp Schwab relocation plan out of concern for the sentiment of local residents who were worried about possible noise pollution. Nukaga won Shimabukuro's consent by promising that US aircraft would not fly over the Henoko, Toyohara, and Abu districts.

But Inamine reiterated that he would not accept any plan other than the agreement reached in 1999 with the government to relocate the airfield to waters off Henoko, saying, "We will continue maintaining our previous stance."

In the event the governor refuses to accept the new plan, the government may take a special legislative step to transfer powers from the governor to the state to use the surface of public waters.

(12) Meeting with Okinawa governor, JDA chief seeks understanding for revised Futenma relocation plan

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
Eve, April 8, 2006

Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Nukaga met with Governor Keiichi Inamine at the JDA yesterday to discuss the issue of relocating the heliport functions of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago.

Following an agreement between Nukaga and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro to place two runways at a US airfield to be built in

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the city, Nukaga spelled out the new agreed plan to Inamine. Without the agreement of the governor, the central government cannot reclaim public waters. Inamine, though, has expressed his opposition to this plan.

Governor Inamine approved the government's initial plan to construct an offshore airport off the Henoko district of Nago, attaching such conditions as joint use of the base as a military-civilian airport and a 15-year time limit. The new proposal does not include these conditions.

Inamine said in a press conference on the night of April 7: "I will stick to the plan to build the base farther offshore." Given this, the government is considering the possibility of arranging a meeting between Prime Minister Koizumi and Governor Inamine.

(13) Government to consider new three-stage subsidy program for base-hosting local governments

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
Evening, April 8, 2006

In a bid to steadily implement a final report due out soon by the Japanese and US governments on the realignment of US forces in Japan, the government decided yesterday to set up a program to provide subsidies to local governments on which a heavier burden of the US military presence will inevitably be imposed as a result of US force realignment.

The new subsidy program will be modeled after the one for local

governments housing nuclear power plants. Under the new program, the government would pay subsidies in stages according to the progress of construction. Should construction work be delayed due to local opposition, payments would be frozen. The government intends to make the new program more detailed than the current system, introducing flexible calculation standards that would reflect increases in new facilities, units, and training.

Under the current system, the government provides base-hosting local governments with base subsidies and compensatory subsidies. The government plans to add more to these and to adopt a three-stage payment formula that covers the environmental impact assessment, start of construction work, and beginning of facility operations.

(14) Futenma relocation: Gov. Inamine objects to two-runway plan

ASAHI (Top play) (Excerpt)
Evening, April 8, 2006

Following an agreement reached between the Defense Agency and Nago on a plan to relocate the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station from Ginowan, Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine held talks with Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga at the agency this morning. Inamine has the power to approve reclaiming land for building the envisaged runways. In his talks with the defense chief, Inamine is believed to have expressed his opposition to the plan, saying he could not accept the revised plan based on a Japan-US agreement reached last October to relocate Futenma Air Station to Cape Henoko in Nago.

(15) Futenma relocation issue still unfinished; Okinawa governor opposes revised plan

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NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 9, 2006

The issue of relocating US forces' Futenma heliport from Ginowan, Okinawa, has now entered a new phase with the government proposing a new plan for constructing two runways. Next on the agenda for a final agreement will be coordinating views with the governor, who has authority to approve the use of publicly owned waters, and settling the cost of relocating US Marines in Okinawa to Guam.

Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Fukushima Nukaga on April 8 met with Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine and sought understanding from him for the new government plan to construct two landing strips in a V-shape on the Camp Schwab coast. Inamine replied that he could not accept the plan as the situation now stands, saying, "I will firmly maintain the prefecture's stance."

He also noted: "I will respect Nago's independent judgment. The government has exclusive control over foreign and defense affairs." Some JDA officials took this comment as tacit approval. However, the governor is outwardly maintaining his usual stance of not approving any relocation plan other than the Henoko Point plan.

Provided that the governor adamantly opposes the two-runway plan, the issue will emerge of how to deal with the governor's right to authorize the use of the public waters when proceeding with the construction plan. Chances are that if the talks between the government and the prefecture run into snags, calls for the enactment of a special measures law designed to transfer the right from the prefecture to the central government might grow among government and ruling party officials.

(16) Okinawa governor opposes new proposal over Futenma relocation; Gov't to push for Futenma relocation, with Nago's consent as leverage

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
April 9, 2006

Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga met with Okinawa Prefecture's Governor Keiichi Inamine yesterday at the Defense Agency over the planned relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in the city of Ginowan, Okinawa. In the meeting, Nukaga asked for the governor's understanding on a remodified plan-which has now been agreed to by Nukaga and Nago City-to install two runways in the shape of V. Inamine, however, reiterated his rejection of any plan except the Henoko offing airstrip installation plan adopted in a 1999 cabinet meeting. "I will respect the (city's) decision but will firmly maintain the prefecture's stance," Inamine said. "The governor is not in a position to consider each single (facility)," Nukaga noted after the meeting. With this, the defense chief indicated that the government would continue talks with Okinawa to obtain its understanding on a package of realignment plans, including the relocation of US Marines from Okinawa to Guam. However, he also stressed that the government would push for Futenma relocation on the basis of its agreement with Nago City.

Japan and the United States will hold a two-day session of intergovernmental consultations on April 13-14 over the

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realignment of US forces in Japan, with senior officials attending. On that occasion, the Japanese and US governments will discuss the issue of sharing the cost of moving Okinawa-based Marines to Guam. The two governments will continue working-level consultations thereafter. The Japanese government will determine its share in a cabinet ministerial meeting and will then enter into the final phase of bilateral coordination with the US government. The two governments will hold a "two-plus-two" foreign and defense ministerial meeting of their security consultative committee this month. The Japanese government will make a cabinet decision to adopt a final report incorporating the remodified Futenma relocation plan as well, and will formally retract the Henoko offing plan.

(17) Nukaga, Shimabukuro reach agreement at eleventh hour on plan to change direction of runway

ASASHI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, April 8, 2006

The Defense Agency and Nago reached an agreement last night on a revised plan to relocate the US Marines Futenma Air Station to Cape Henoko in Nago. What was discussed last night between the two sides became clear today. Nago was strongly opposed to the direction of one the two V-shaped runways. A deal was struck at the eleventh hour by turning its direction.

The direction was turned for the one offshore to be used exclusively for takeoffs. After taking off, US aircraft will head east-northeast.

According to a source connected with Nago, the Toyohara district was on an extension of the runway in the plan presented by Nukaga at the outset of the talks. The reverse flight path of this runway would fly over the Toyohara area. Given the situation, Shimabukuro threatened to break off the talks, saying, "I cannot convince local residents with such a plan."

In response, Nukaga said, "The US military will not use it in the other direction. You have to trust the government." But Shimabukuro still insisted: "We cannot trust the US military. They could use it in the other direction depending on wind and other factors."

Nukaga and Shimabukuro continued their talks after two intermissions and finally reached an agreement to move this runway further offshore.

(18) Gaps in views of Japan, US over sharing cost of transferring US Marines to Guam; US focuses on relocation cost, unhappy with loan system

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 9, 2006

The Defense Agency (JDA) and Nago, Okinawa City have struck a deal on the relocation of Futenma Air Station. The US regards the costs of relocating Futenma functions and transferring US Marines in Okinawa to Guam as a package. It intends to strengthen its call on Japan to pay 75% of the relocation cost, based on the agreement on the transfers.

Commenting on the Futenma relocation issue, US Department of

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State Spokesman McCormack on April 7 told a news conference, "I believe the Department of Defense is now vetting Japan's proposal." Since the new proposal is different from the agreement reached last October, the US side appears to have found it necessary to check whether there are any obstacles to the operation of the US military in the new plan.

For the US, negotiations with a local community that hosts a relocation site are Japan's domestic issue. The problem for it is rather the gap in the views of the two countries over the sharing of the cost of relocating US Marines to Guam, which the US estimates at 10 billion dollars. The US insists that Japan should pay 7.5 billion dollars, while Japan has proposed extending 3 billion dollars in loans. The US appears to be dissatisfied with both the amount and the loan method proposed by Japan. The predominant view in Japan is that 75% is far too much and that this must be a bargaining ploy on the part of the US.

The US views the costs of relocating Futenma functions, reducing the burden on Okinawa, and transferring US Marines to Guam as a package. Its logic is that Futenma functions cannot be relocated until the two countries reach agreement on the sharing of costs. It is bound to call on Japan to make concessions. Tokyo and Washington will hold working-level talks by officials responsible for foreign and defense affairs in Tokyo starting on April 13. A political judgment at the cabinet-minister-level will likely be made for a final settlement.

(19) US Navy to deploy new missile warship to Yokosuka in August

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
April 8, 2006

The US Navy will deploy the USS Shiloh, a guided missile cruiser, to Yokosuka base in August, US Naval Forces Japan announced yesterday. The Shiloh, which has a displacement of 9,600 tons at full load, is equipped with SM-3 sea-based missiles to intercept ballistic missiles. The US Navy has already been staging Aegis-equipped destroyers in the Sea of Japan on the alert for ballistic missile launches. The cruiser's deployment can be taken as an effort to step up their intercept readiness.

SCHIEFFER